

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

For Immediate Release

REMARKS

Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns

Opening Remarks to Regional Journalists on the Margins of African Union Summit

January 30, 2012

U.S. Mission to the African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Thank you very much and good afternoon.

I am very pleased to be in Addis Ababa. My visit to Ethiopia concludes a week-long trip to Africa, which also included visits to Ghana, Uganda, and South Sudan.

My trip, which comes on the heels of Secretary Clinton's visit to West Africa last week, reaffirms the high priority the Obama Administration attaches to Africa. It highlights our ongoing commitment to work with African partners both to seize opportunities and address common challenges.

America's commitment to the continent is underscored by our work to support gains in democratic governance, sustainable development, economic growth, and the peaceful resolution of conflict. This includes our support for democracy and governance programs across the continent, our ongoing efforts to strengthen commercial ties between the U.S. and Africa, and our steadfast support for the protection and promotion of human rights.

The United States is committed to supporting programs that both support Africa's long-term goals and short-term needs. President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative, to which we committed \$3.5 billion over 3 years, promotes food security and helps reduce vulnerability to drought and other shocks in partnership with governments across Africa. In the near-term, we are leading international efforts to respond to drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, including by committing over \$870 million in relief for the crisis.

The United States also continues to provide extensive assistance to combat disease and to build the capacity of health systems across Africa, part of a \$63 billion over five years commitment. On Thursday, I visited one excellent example of that effort, a public-private partnership at Wagagai in Uganda, one of more than a hundred such clinics that we support across Uganda to provide preventive care and comprehensive maternal and child health services.

Over the last week I have also had the pleasure of meeting with civil society leaders engaged in compelling and vital work in their communities. This includes meeting with a cross-section of young leaders who are engaged in dynamic work in every sector of society. As many of you

already know, the Obama Administration has made a special point of engaging the continent's next generation of leaders to discuss the broad spectrum of U.S.-African issues.

At the same time, this last week of discussions also covered a range of security, political, and humanitarian challenges facing the continent. The humanitarian situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile featured prominently in many of these discussions. The U.S. remains deeply concerned regarding the Government of Sudan's continued denial of humanitarian access to those two states. Conflict and aerial bombardments have disrupted the planting season. Experts predict that, absent immediate humanitarian access, we could see emergency levels of food insecurity in a matter of weeks. The international community will not be able to stand by as this preventable humanitarian crisis unfolds.

My consultations also underscored the need for Sudan and South Sudan to quickly reach agreement on oil and related financial issues. The time has come to reach an amicable and negotiated solution. Unilateral actions on both sides only risk greater tension and further economic losses for both countries. Resolving this and other pending issues is the best path to achieve long-term peace, stability, and economic prosperity.

The challenge of Somalia came up frequently in my meetings and of course during discussions here at the African Union as well. As I said to President Museveni and others, the United States commends the work of the African Union Mission in Somalia. We hope that the African Union will continue to move quickly in finalizing a concept of operations for an expanded AMISOM so that we can discuss this issue in the UN Security Council as soon as possible. These discussions also centered on the need for the Transitional Federal Government to make steady and sustained progress on the Roadmap in advance of the end of the TFG's mandate in August.

Additionally, various leaders expressed concern about the situation in Nigeria. Boko Haram poses a growing threat to the region. We will continue to support the Government of Nigeria on this and other challenges facing the country.

I was particularly delighted to be able to lead the U.S. delegation in attending the opening of the African Union Summit. The United States has a special relationship with this vital regional organization, including by being the first non-member state to accredit a diplomatic mission dedicated exclusively to the African Union. And last year Secretary Clinton became the first Secretary of State to address a formal session of the AU. We collaborate and partner with the African Union on a broad range of issues and will continue to assist in augmenting the AU's capacity to address the many opportunities and challenges facing the continent.

And now I'd be glad to take some questions.

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